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courage is contagious

Viewing cable 08BOGOTA3537, URIBE CONTINUES TO KEEP ALL OPTIONS OPEN ON

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08BOGOTA3537**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08BOGOTA3537	2008-09-22 19:25	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Bogota

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.semana.com/wikileaks/Seccion/168.aspx>

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #3537/01 2661925
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 221925Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4860
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8391
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1028
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 6573
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 2348
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 7253
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

id: 170996
date: 9/22/2008 19:25
refid: 08BOGOTA3537
origin: Embassy Bogota
classification: CONFIDENTIAL
destination:
header:

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #3537/01 2661925
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 221925Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4860
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8391
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1028
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 6573
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 2348
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RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

----- header ends -----

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 003537

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/19/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: URIBE CONTINUES TO KEEP ALL OPTIONS OPEN ON
POSSIBLE THIRD TERM

Classified By: Political Counselor John Creamer
Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) President Uribe continues to keep all options open on a possible third presidential term. He urged Congress to shelve the proposal for a constitutional change to allow a third term after it was presented on September 10, but congressional leaders said Congress is legally required to consider the initiative. Uribe also intimated he would not run for a third term, or might delay a reelection bid until 2014, if his congressional coalition named a single Uribista candidate. Still, coalition leaders tell us it would be very difficult for the fractious Uribe coalition to agree on a unified candidate. Third term initiative leader Guillermo Giraldo predicted Uribe would run in 2010, and said the first congressional votes on the initiative would occur in mid-October. He dismissed the 2014 option, arguing that Uribe would face strong resistance from whoever was the incumbent. End summary.

URIBE KEEPING HIS OPTIONS OPEN

[1](#)2. (C) President Uribe continues to keep all options open as the initiative to amend the constitution to allow for a possible third Uribe term makes it way through Congress. Uribe said on September 10--the day the reelection proposal was presented in Congress--that he wanted Congress to put the reelection proposal on the back burner so it could focus on pending judicial and political reform bills. He also suggested he might defer any reelection ambitions until 2014. Uribe heightened the uncertainty on September 17, saying he was inclined not to run for a third term, but only if his fractious coalition reached agreement on a single "Uribista" presidential candidate.

[1](#)3. (C) Still, House of Representatives President German Varon (Cambio Radical) and third term initiative leader Guillermo Giraldo (U Party) told us Uribe's statements were tactics to deflect third term critics. Conservative Party leader Efraim Cepeda, Giraldo, and Varon told us it would be very hard for the coalition to unite around a single candidate given the presidential ambitions of Cambio Radical leader German Vargas, Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos, Ambassador to the United Kingdom Noemi Sanin, and others.

Cepeda said that if Uribe did not run, the election could be contested by five or more Uribista candidates--creating the prospect of a victory by a leftist candidate such as former Bogota Mayor Lucho Garzon and likely prompting another Uribe presidential bid.

14. (C) Former Senate President Nancy Gutierrez agreed that Uribe's refusal to clarify his third term intentions is designed to ensure that numerous coalition candidates move forward, making a unified candidate unlikely. U Party Senator Martha Lucia Ramirez, who is planning her own candidacy, said despite his oft-stated claims to want a unified coalition candidate, Uribe has done nothing to promote such a goal. Journalist Mauricio Vargas, who is close to Uribe, told us the president "does not want to be close" to any contenders, including Uribista candidates, because such distance would facilitate an Uribe third term campaign in either 2010 or 2014. Giraldo contended that Uribe could not wait until 2014, since any incumbent--even an Uribista--would likely seek his or her own second term.

URIBE AS FDR?

15. (C) Giraldo told us he and Uribe agreed when the reelection effort began that they would not discuss Uribe's intentions so Giraldo could maintain "plausible deniability." He explained that Uribe is following President Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1940 strategy of "sitting back and waiting until a last minute clamor from the people" forces him to run. Giraldo noted that under the Law of Guarantees (Ley de Garantias), Uribe could delay any presidential announcement until November 2009, six months before the May 2010 presidential elections. Still, most observers think Uribe would have to actively campaign to generate the 25% turnout of registered voters (approximately 7 million) required to

make the constitutional referendum valid. Several Casa de Narino insiders tell us Uribe will need to declare his intentions even earlier to ensure congressional passage of the initiative before the end of the year.

FIRST CONGRESSIONAL VOTES COULD OCCUR IN MID-OCTOBER

16. (U) The third term proposal language being considered by Congress has also raised doubts about Uribe's intentions, with some legislators arguing that the current language would preclude a 2010 Uribe candidacy. Giraldo acknowledged the issue, but told us Congress could modify the language to remove any uncertainty. He said that despite Uribe's request that Congress drop the referendum issue, Congress is legally required to consider the measure as the first order of a business, since it is the result of a popular initiative. He expects the first two of the required four congressional votes to happen in mid-October.

BROWNFIELD

=====CABLE ENDS=====